

DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY

PRESIDENT'S CABINET

Minutes

Meeting date: September 26, 2022

Members in attendance: Dr. E.E. Caston, Dr. Joshua Armstrong, Dr. Leslie Griffin, Ms. Lucia Chacon Habis, Mr. Mike Kinnison, Dr. Eddie Lovin, Mr. Rick Munroe, Dr. Andy Novobilski, Dr. Michelle Roberts, and Mr. Jamie Rutledge (recorder – Ms. Claire Cole)

Members not in attendance: Dr. Caroline Fletcher

Guests: Mr. Gregory Braggs, Web Developer, Communications and Marketing
Ms. Brittany Davis, Director, Communications and Marketing
Mr. JP LaFors, EAB
Ms. Holly Ray, Chair-Elect, Administrative Staff Council
Ms. Amanda Robinson, Interim Director, Alumni Affairs
Mr. Philip Walton, EAB

Call to Order: A regular meeting of the President's Cabinet was held in the President's Conference Room on September 26, 2022. The meeting convened at 1:30 p.m. with Dr. Caston presiding.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

On motion by Dr. Lovin and seconded by Mr. Rutledge, all Cabinet Members present and participating voted unanimously to approve the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on September 12, 2022.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

- Dr. Caston gave an overview of the activities and events from the last week. Clint Black performed to a sold-out crowd at the BPAC. Dr. Caston provided an update to the IHL Board of Trustees during their annual retreat. Delta State celebrated its 97th birthday with a ceremony in the Lena Roberts Sillers Chapel. The Mississippi Nurses Foundation honored their scholarship recipients with a luncheon. Ms. Taylor Skelton, Instructor of Social Work, passed away, and the university held a memorial service for Dr. Karen Fosheim last week.
- Mr. Kinnison gave an update on Athletics. The soccer teams hosted University of West Alabama and University of Alabama-Huntsville over the weekend. The men's team lost to University of West Alabama and tied with University of Alabama-Huntsville. The women's team defeated University of West Alabama and lost to University of Alabama-Huntsville. The women's team travels to University of West Georgia and Valdosta State University this weekend. The tennis teams competed in the Intercollegiate Tennis Association tournament over the weekend. The football team defeated University of West Florida on Saturday, and they host their first home game this weekend against Valdosta State University. The golf team competes at Henderson State University on Monday, October 3 and Tuesday, October 4.
- Mr. Rutledge shared an update on Facilities projects. Paving of the School of Nursing parking lot begins this week. The project will take three to four weeks to be completed. The roofing project on Whitfield

Hall will be completed next week. Mr. Rutledge met with the engineers for the Mississippi Department of Transportation sidewalk project last week to discuss plans and move forward on the project. The Bureau of Buildings assigned project numbers to Foundation Hall, Court of Governors, and the BPAC, which allows the projects to move forward in selecting architects next week.

- Dr. Caston shared with Cabinet members some of the meetings and events planned for this week. A Retirement Reception honoring Dr. Beverly Moon will occur at 4:00 p.m. today in the Leroy E. Morganti Atrium in Kent Wyatt Hall. A press conference will be held on Thursday to announce the Agriculture Aircraft Operations Career Pathway Program. Peabo Bryson and Taylor Dayne will perform at the BPAC on Thursday. Dr. Caston will meet with Delta State alumnus William Bell on Friday.
- Mr. Munroe invited Interim Director of Alumni Affairs Amanda Robinson to provide Cabinet members with an overview of Pig Pickin' weekend. Ms. Robinson provided Cabinet members with a full schedule of events and a layout for Statesmen Park tailgating. The Department of Commercial Aviation, the Swimming and Diving teams, and Soccer teams are having alumni reunions this weekend. Tailgating begins at 12:00 p.m. on Saturday, and live entertainment will be provided by DMI from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. A pep rally will occur at 4:00 p.m. in Statesmen Park prior to kickoff at 6:00 p.m.
- Dr. Roberts announced the President's Reception will begin prior to the Delta State vs. Valdosta State football game, starting at 5:30 p.m. in the Dorgan Center. All Cabinet members are invited to attend.

CABINET TOPIC

EAB Presentation for Website Content.....Mr. Munroe

Ms. Brittany Davis and Mr. Gregory Braggs are working with Mr. JP LaFors and Mr. Philip Walton at EAB to revamp the Delta State University website and increase the university's visibility online. Mr. LaFors and Mr. Walton shared with Cabinet members their Search Engine Optimization Audit Findings Summary.

Search engine optimization is the process of improving or optimizing a website in order to increase visibility within search engines. Search engine optimization matters because: 1) a college website is the #1 most helpful resource in any student's search; 2) 85% of Gen Z and 60% of Millennials search for academic-related topics in a search engine; and, 3) both Gen Z and Millennials start with a search engine for research on schools. Ranking on page one of a search engine's results page makes a huge difference in whether the university's website receives prospective student traffic. Search engine optimization ranking factors all rely on content. EAB works with universities to help them drive up search engine visibility for key web pages by: understanding how students are searching for college experiences, and how competitors are ranking; prioritize and pick degrees, programs, and subjects you want to rank for; optimize for your on-page search engine optimization and Google knowledge panels in content strategy; and, track performance and make changes to where needed. One part of the search engine optimization audit conducted by EAB is looking into academic pages to see if the content is optimized to solve for search intent. To reach audiences, not only must the university create content that speaks to their priorities and thought processes, but you must also understand where to deliver that content most effectively. Webpages must have immediacy, relevance, authenticity, answers, and return on investment.

EAB reviewed organic search metrics for www.deltastate.edu from May 2020 to March 2022. Organic search users increased 3% year over year with a total of 890,600 total organic users. A person visited an average of 2.7 pages per visit with the visit lasting an average of two and half minutes. The bounce rate for the university is 50.3% meaning half of the visitors left the website without acting. Delta State needs to grow its search engine optimization footprint to be competitive. Delta State has 25,200 keywords that a user might enter into a search engine that describes the purpose of their online search. The entire website is ranking for a total of 23,486 keywords in Google Search. Delta State and EAB has completed some of the

work to improve the university’s search engine optimization, but the work will be on-going to stay competitive and rank higher.

BUSINESS

Action

FY23 Budget Revision Mr. Rutledge

Mr. Rutledge reported that the university budgeted for \$18,739,418 in tuition revenue for FY23. For the Fall 2022 semester, \$8,645,582 of tuition revenue was collected. The projected tuition revenue for Spring 2023 is \$7,694,568, which is based on an average 11% decline in enrollment from the Fall semester to the Spring semester. Therefore, the new projected tuition revenue for FY23 is \$16,340,150 — a variance of \$2,407,612 from the initial budgeted amount. The university budgeted for \$4,200,174 in scholarship expenditures for FY23. For the Fall 2022 semester, \$2,139,279 of scholarship expenditures were awarded. The projected scholarship expenditure for Spring 2023 is \$1,903,958, which is based on an average 11% decline in enrollment from the Fall semester to the Spring semester. The new projected scholarship expenditure for FY23 is \$4,043,237 — a variance of \$156,937. As a result, the university is projected to have a net loss of \$2,250,675 in tuition revenue for FY23. At the July 11, 2022 Cabinet meeting, Cabinet members voted to postpone the funding of Phase I and Phase II additions, totaling \$1,404,198, until enrollment figures were confirmed on the 15th day of classes. By postponing the funding of Phase I and Phase II additions, the university can reduce the variance to \$846,477. Mr. Rutledge recommended to use the university’s cash contingency fund and regular contingency fund to cover the remaining variance.

Motion: Moved by Mr. Rutledge to continue postponing Phase I and Phase II additions and to use the university’s contingency funds to cover the university’s projected net loss in tuition and seconded by Dr. Lovin. The motion was approved.

Institutional Effectiveness and Planning Dr. Novobilski

Dr. Novobilski shared a request from the Quality Enhancement Plan committee to add an additional goal to the university goals in place for the next two years. The additional goal is “improve academic quality and student achievement.”

Motion: Moved by Dr. Novobilski to add an additional goal to the university goals and seconded by Dr. Lovin. The motion was approved.

In preparing for the university’s reaccreditation in 2024 and creation of a new strategic plan, a suggestion was made to hire an external consultant to help the university devise the new strategic plan. The external consultant would be managed by the Office of Institutional Research, Effectiveness, and Planning. Upon approval by Cabinet members, a Request for Quote will be developed.

Motion: Moved by Dr. Novobilski to hire an external consultant to help devise the new strategic plan and seconded by Dr. Lovin. The motion was approved.

Discussion

Email Signatures and Business Cards update Mr. Munroe

Mr. Munroe shared with Cabinet members the revised business card specifications in the Identity Standards Guide. Business cards can be ordered from Okra Express, and there are two format options. The reverse side of the card can host a QR code linking a person to a specific webpage on the Delta State

website. The Office of Admissions has their own business card option with the Fighting Okra and Delta State logo on the reverse of the card. Also, Mr. Munroe shared with Cabinet members the revised email signature options. Mr. Munroe will work with OIT to see if they can automate the email signatures to the selected format.

Enrollment Update/Overview.....Dr. Lovin

Dr. Lovin provided an enrollment update. Dr. Lovin shared with Cabinet members an issue that occurred with a mailout sent by EAB to potential students. EAB will rectify the situation by mailing out new letters and buying additional potential student names for the university. EAB has been a beneficial resource for the Office of Admissions in developing alternative ways to reach out to potential students. Currently, 378 students have utilized an application code on materials sent by EAB.

Additional Information

None

INFORMATIONAL/CALENDAR ITEMS:

- Retirement Reception honoring Dr. Beverly Moon, September 26, 4:00 p.m., Leroy E. Morganti Atrium, Kent Wyatt Hall
- An Evening of Hits starring Peabo Bryson and Taylor Dayne, September 29, 7:30 p.m., BPAC
- Pig Pickin’ Weekend, September 30 – October 1
- Delta State vs. Valdosta State University Football Game, October 1, 6:00 p.m., Parker Field-McCool Stadium
- Fall Break for Faculty and Students, October 11-12

NEXT MEETING:

- Next Cabinet Meeting – Wednesday, October 12, 2022 at 1:30 p.m.
- Next Cabinet Meeting Topic – TBD

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m.